

IN THE CLAIMS:

In response to the Office Action of August 27, 2001, please amend the claims as follows. Please cancel claims 21-117 without prejudice and add the following new claims:

118. (New) A system for supporting a virtual entity comprising:
plural distributed, trusted electronic commerce nodes for use by plural parties, one or more said trusted electronic commerce nodes securely creating one or more digital credentials representing a virtual entity comprising a cooperative participation among plural parties and/or nodes for one or more commercial purposes; a digital credentialing arrangement that issues digital credentials to said plural parties and/or nodes to at least in part represent the identity of said parties and/or nodes; and
a secure communications arrangement that securely communicates among said plural parties and/or nodes digital information related to at least in part the identity of said parties and/or nodes,
wherein said system employs at least one of said one or more credentials representing said virtual entity to, at least in part, enable said virtual entity to at least in part participate in at least one commercial process.

119. (New) Apparatus as in claim 118 further including means for delivering control information independently of content information that is to be controlled by said control information.

120. (New) Apparatus as in claim 118 further including means for allowing a value chain participant to stipulate at least one aspect of information privacy control.

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